

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Elko District Office**

**LONG CANYON EXPLORATION PROJECT
NewWest Gold USA, Inc..**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
BLM/EK/PL-2008/011
3809, N-82445**

NewWest Gold USA, Inc. (NWG) submitted a Plan of Operations (NVN-82445) for mineral (Gold) exploration activities, which includes construction of drill sites, roads, and installation of four (4) monitor wells (Proposed Action). The Long Canyon Exploration Project (Project) is located in the Pequop Mountains approximately 28 miles east-southeast of the city of Wells, in Elko County, Nevada. The Project area encompasses approximately 2,114 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Wells Field Office, Elko District (BLM) and split estate/private land. The total proposed disturbance is 64.93 acres of which 44.93 acres are on public land and 20 acres are on split estate/private land.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on my review of the attached environmental assessment (EA) for the Long Canyon Exploration Project (BLM/EK/PL-2008/011), I have determined that the proposed action, as summarized above and described and analyzed in the EA, will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required prior to BLM approval of the exploration plan. This finding is based on consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts.

Context

The Project area encompasses about 2,114 acres of public and split estate/private land located 28 miles east-southeast of the city of Wells, Elko County, Nevada. It is in the Pequop Mountains, in steep terrain at elevations ranging between 5,800 feet to 7,700 feet amsl. This area is characterized as a sparsely populated agricultural area. The dominant use of public lands is for livestock grazing and hunting.

Intensity

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

Potential adverse impacts on natural resources such as big game, and sensitive wildlife species would be avoided or reduced by the environmental protection measures included in the Proposed Action of the EA (page 2-10) that BLM requires as a condition of approving the plan. This includes completion of surveys for migratory birds and other species of concern, prior to surface disturbance, and would benefit conservation of the sensitive species. Successful revegetation of disturbed areas using BLM approved seed mix is expected to benefit post project use of the area by livestock and wildlife.

NWG will implement measures to ensure that Project activities do not reduce the flow of Johnson Springs, nor reduce the production capacity of any West Wendover City (City) wells, nor impair the quality of the water of Johnson Springs or any City wells. To enhance the immediate understanding of the hydrology of the area and to ensure that the Proposed Action does not damage Johnson Springs or any City wells. Those measures have been developed in consultation with West Wendover city officials.

The entire Long Canyon Exploration Project has been determined to constitute a single federal undertaking under the National Historic Preservation Act and environmental protection measures will apply to the entire 2,114 acre Project Area. Measures will include buffers, physical barricades, data recovery where necessary and other appropriate measures on a site specific basis.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

Potential impacts to public health and safety, including safety of workers, would be avoided by adherence to standard practices required for exploration activities. A hazardous waste spill prevention and control plan is included as part of the plan.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The project has been planned to avoid cultural resources identified by a survey of the areas to be disturbed. No park lands, special recreation areas, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness or wilderness study areas or other area of critical environmental concern are in the vicinity, so no such unique areas would be affected. NWG has agreed to conduct surveys prior to commencing activities during the nesting season (generally April 1 - July 31), and report any observation of an active nest by a sensitive raptor and/or migratory bird of concern to the BLM Wells Field Office, so that BLM can advise the operator of measures to mitigate potential adverse effects.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects of the proposed exploration are commonly known and not highly controversial.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The effects of exploration activities are well known, and none of the effects on any resource evaluated in the EA are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. All drilling and construction methods proposed to be employed are accepted practices.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

If the proposed exploration succeeds in defining sufficient mineralization (an ore body) to make mining economically feasible, future development of a mine would be considered. At that time a complete plan of operations and reclamation plan would be submitted and the potential impacts of the proposed action would be analyzed under NEPA.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions in the area are mostly related to multiple use management of the area for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat. All resources were evaluated with respect to other land disturbing activities in the area, and no cumulatively significant impacts were identified.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

A survey of the area was completed and measures to avoid or mitigate sites determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) have been agreed to. BLM presented the project to Wells Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of the Western Shoshone and conducted a field tour with the Wells Band Environmental Department. To date, no locations having traditional, cultural, or spiritual importance have been identified. BLM policy provides for inadvertent discovery and mitigation procedures to be included as a condition of approving the plan, and for consultation to continue if a mining plan is submitted in the future. The proposed action is not expected to cause the loss or destruction of any significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.*

No threatened or endangered species are known to inhabit the project area and there is no potential for the action to adversely affect them or their habitat. There is potential for BLM Sensitive Species or State of Nevada Listed Species to occur in the project area. Impacts to these species would be avoided by pre-disturbance surveys, seasonal restrictions and the relatively small amount (64.93 acres) of disturbance over the 2,114 acre project area.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

In accordance with mining regulations found at 43 CFR 3809, the operator must obtain any permits required from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection or the county for the protection of air and water resources and must be in compliance with all applicable Federal, State and local laws or requirements.

Bryan K. Fuell
Manager, Wells Field Office

/s/ September 15, 2008
Date